

PRE-TRAVEL TIPS

Helpful tips for our travelers to reference while completing travel planning.

1. Understand the allowable travel expenses before you go.
2. **All** overnight travel and business meals requires a fully approved preapproval, completed in Chrome River prior to your trip.
 - a. Pre-approval reports should be submitted and fully approved prior to the beginning of travel.
 - b. Pre-approval reports must include all anticipated expenses, including expenses that are “Company Paid” (paid with college Small PCard, direct billed, or AP invoice/check payment).
3. Lodging:
 - a. Check the GSA allowable rate for your destination on the [GSA Per Diem Rates site](#).
 - b. Not sure of the physical lodging location? Use the [USPS Zip Code Lookup Tool](#).
 - c. Call the hotel and ask to honor the 100% GSA allowable rate or select another hotel that is within a reasonable distance.
 - i. Use [FedRooms Lodging Tool](#) to help find hotels that honor the 100% GSA allowable.
 - ii. Be careful, hotels may use a “state government rate” that is higher than the actual 100% GSA allowable rate.
 - d. Conference rates may very well exceed the 100% GSA allowable. Call the hotel to verify if 100% GSA allowable rate is available prior to booking at the conference rate.
4. Meals Per Diem:
 - a. Reimbursable for overnight travel only.
 - b. Based on the physical lodging location. Refer to 3a and 3b above.
 - c. Verify what meals are provided by the hotel and event, if any.
5. Transportation:
 - a. Utilize the most economical method of transportation.
 - b. Travel routing must be the most direct practical route.
 - c. If traveling by a car:
 - i. First, attempt to obtain a State Car
 - ii. Second, attempt to obtain a Car Rental ([Enterprise](#) contract)
 - iii. Third, use a personal vehicle
 - iv. Cost benefit analysis required with single trip mileage exceeds 200 miles total, regardless if traveling in a single day or multi-day.
 - v. If a State Car AND a Car Rental are not available or accessible, provide adequate justification and evidence.
 - d. If traveling by air/rail:
 - i. Coach/economy airfare/rail accommodations are allowable.
 - ii. Use the “Hopper” smart app or [Skyscanner](#) to find lower prices and best times to purchase flights.
 - e. If traveling by Public Transit/Shuttle/Taxi:
 - i. Must be for official business travel only, such as travel from Airport to Hotel. Travel to/from meals is not reimbursable.
 - ii. Verify if the hotel, airport, and/or conference hosts provides free transportation to/from airport.

6. Business Meals:
 - a. Requires pre-approval by Agency Head and must meet requirements on pages 13 & 23 of [CAPP Topic 20335 State Travel Regulations](#).
7. If you are not sure which department code to use, please check with your immediate supervisor; grant administrator, or college business office (business manager).
8. Major Expenses:
 - a. Expenses like airfare and registration fees are often purchased months in advance in order to obtain lower costs.
 - b. These expenses do NOT have to be incurred by the traveler personally. To avoid the large financial burden and possible interest charges, seek additional payment options that may be available at your College.
 - i. Small Purchase Cards
 - ii. Agency Air Travel Card
 - iii. Non-PO Voucher, check payment
9. Third Party Booking:
 - a. Generally, third party booking sites charge travelers booking fees. Verify if the third party charges booking fees. If so, attempt to book directly through the hotel, airline, etc. instead to avoid fees and surcharges.
 - i. FedRooms Lodging does **not** charge booking fees.
 - b. Third party booking sites may not provide travelers with the actual daily room rate estimate. It is important to obtain and request pre-approval for the actual daily room rate estimates, not the average room rate estimates.
10. Trip Cancellation:
 - a. It is the traveler's responsibility to notify the appropriate parties (or individuals) when travel arrangements need to be cancelled and/or rescheduled. If the traveler is negligent in doing so, the traveler will bear the costs personally. For example, hotels may charge traveler for non-cancelled reservations.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the traveler and approver to ensure travel expenses are reasonable and necessary. When planning and paying for travel expenses, travelers and travel planners must seek ways to reduce the cost of the travel.

Please be sure to review any college-level policies for additional travel guidance.

Additional Resources: [CAPP Topics 20335 & 20336](#), [Traveler Guidance](#), [VCCS SSC Travel Policies](#) and SSC Help Center.

For additional questions or concerns, please contact the SSC Help Center at 540-591-4000, 877-340-5577, or help@ssc.vccs.edu.